

The General Assembly

This Assembly, by action taken last year, was denoted "The Country Church Assembly." Prominence was given to this idea in several ways. Evidently many of the Presbyteries had it in mind in the selection of commissioners. The Assembly emphasized it in selecting as its moderator a man who for forty-three years has been pastor of one country charge.

Carrying out the instructions of the last Assembly a committee had prepared a program for a series of popular meetings bearing upon this subject, which occupied most of the evening sessions. There were two or more addresses each evening.

At the first of these meetings an address was made by Rev. W. H. Mills, of Clemson College, South Carolina, on "The Country Church Problem Stated."

Among other things Mr. Mills said that this is not a local problem, but that it affects all parts of the country. This was illustrated by the great gathering recently at Columbus, Ohio. It is not denominational, for all Churches are confronting it. It is not spiritual only, for the Church has other work to do than preaching the gospel. Of strictly country churches eight hundred and sixty-seven, or 64 per cent, are growing, and one hundred and seventy, or 12½ per cent, are reported as dying. But other facts do not seem to be so encouraging. Attention was called to the fact that many city churches are growing rapidly, while many country churches are losing in numbers.

The problem of the country church is the problem of American country life for the best type of American home is disappearing from the country. The problem is chiefly economic and social. Returns from farm work are small, and there is lack of adequate social life. The problem of the country church is inseparably intertwined with the larger problem of our whole country life, to maintain on the soil, and out of the soil, the best type of the American home. Has the Church anything to do with this problem? I answer, much every way. It is concerned with it for the very reason that makes James urge the supply of physical needs and prompted the Saviour in healing the sick. It becomes the Church first and principally to furnish adequate spiritual motive for those who labor to relieve our country life of its economic and social disadvantages. The Church must bring the land book and the landless man together. The Church must use its own funds to help our young men of good moral character to acquire their own homes. We have some millions now loaned on mortgages of city real estate in college and seminary endowments and other trust funds. Why not combine philanthropy with business, and lend to our young people for fifteen to twenty years to aid them to establish their own homes in the country about our churches now so sadly afflicted with absentee landlordism? Shall the State lead in rural credits? A business man said the Assembly could not do a wiser thing.

The Church must find a new interpretation of the second great commandment in regard to loving our neighbor. Men live by their work and the Church must see that its love, Christian love, goes into business. We know how to manage business upon the co-operative basis. We have done it, but we have done it selfishly, as illustrated in the Presbyterian Ministers' Fund, and other such associations.

It seems to me that every man of us ought to ask what can I do to advance my people economically and

socially. Can I help them to fight the boll weevil? Can I help them to get better prices for their garden truck? We are Christian men, and the call to us is to a man's job.

This whole problem of rural organization rests mainly on spiritual growth.

The problem of the country church may be stated in these words, to maintain and develop upon the soil out of the soil a people who shall draw from the Church their inspiration toward every organization that will promise to bring them a more abundant life here, as well as that knowledge of the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev. Gaines B. Hall, of Graham, Texas, spoke on "The Importance of the Country Church (1) In the Life of the Community; (2) In the Growth of the Denomination." He said, among other things, that the Church is able to meet the needs of any community. Seventy-five per cent of our population live in the country. It is the duty of the Church to carry the gospel to this country population. The Church is important to every community. It furnishes much of the social life of the people, and they are brought closer together through the Church than in any other way. It is the duty of the city church to reach out into the country around it. He told of interesting work that had been accomplished around the city in which he lives, and of the results accomplished. Whole communities had been transformed by the establishment of a mission.

The country church is the feeder of the city church and much of the leadership of the city church comes from the country. This makes it very important that the men of the country should be brought into the Church, for the sake both of the country and the city.

Another speaker at one of these meetings was Rev. H. H. Hudson, of Charlottesville, Va. He spoke on "Financial Methods." He said that this is one of the most vital questions connected with the country church. The first thing needed is get country people to realize their ability to give what is needed. A definite financial plan should be adopted, including weekly or monthly subscriptions. Information should be given to educate the people as to the needs of the Church at home and abroad. Many country people do not take any Church paper and so are poorly informed as to the work of the Church. There should be oversight and co-operation on the part of the Presbytery, especially by having a superintendent of missions who will look after the mission work and the weaker churches.

What is needed above all is a thorough consecration to the Master and his service. When men give themselves wholly to him, they will give all that they ought to give for advancing his work.

Rev. William Denham, of Augusta County, Virginia, spoke on "The Possibilities of the Country Church." He said the greatest possibility is the development of the spiritual life. People in the country formerly had more preaching than they have to-day. The sermons were longer than they are now. And the preachers of those days preached a strong gospel. Then the preparatory services for communion were more extended and more frequent. One of the great needs is a revival of the family altar and religion in the home. Pastors can and should develop Christian leadership. Conventions, such as those of the Laymen's Movement, will prove very helpful. There is great room for development in the benevolent offerings of the country church. Great things should be attempted. Urge the people

to adopt the tithe system of giving.

Rev. C. Groshorn Gunn, of Kentucky, made an address, illustrated with stereopticon views, telling of the wonderful mission work that has been done and is being done in "Beautiful Breathitt and Lovely Lee." This great work, started by the late Dr. E. O. Guerrant, is being carried on by worthy successors. It shows what can be done in what seems to some unpromising territory by the Church and Christian schools.

One entire evening was given to the moderator, Rev. Dr. C. W. Grafton, of Union City, Miss. He gave a most excellent sketch of his long pastorate. Though his address was the longest delivered at the Assembly, he held the attention of his large audience through it all, because of their intense interest in the narrative which he gave of the experiences through which he and his church had passed. There were none of them that were specially remarkable, but through them all there throbbed life and love. Almost every problem of the country church had been met and solved, many of them before it was realized that there was any country church problem.

One of the facts that was brought out very fully in these addresses is that the country church is beginning to wake up to the fact that it has a real work to do, and that it has the ability to do a great deal more of it than it has ever done in the past. Another fact is that the city church is beginning to realize the value of the country church, and is more willing than formerly to aid it in doing its work.

Papers Adopted

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE BIBLE CAUSE.

The Standing Committee on the Bible Cause respectfully submits as its report the following:

Into the hands of your committee has come only the report of the Permanent Committee on the Bible Cause, together with the annual report of the American Bible Society, and other literature setting forth the work of that society. In accordance with the recommendation of the last Assembly the Permanent Committee prepared a program for the Centennial celebration of the society, and on Sunday night, May 21st, in the presence of a large congregation, after a brief report by the Rev. M. B. Porter, the Chairman of the Assembly's Permanent Committee, and Secretary of the South Atlantic Agency, Rev. W. W. Moore, D. D., delivered a scholarly and inspiring address.

The notable event brought to the attention of the Assembly in the report and the celebration, emphasizes afresh certain great salient points:

(a) That this great society has held strictly to and greatly accomplished the one grand work for which it was instituted—the wider circulation of the sacred Scriptures without note or comment.

(b) That it has steadily grown in the love and confidence of all the great religious bodies of this country.

(c) That its work through the years of its existence has been not merely the printing and distributing of the Scriptures, but also the translation, by competent scholars of God's word into the languages and dialects of the world, so as to make the Bible the ubiquitous book of the world; that every man, everywhere, may read the words of Eternal Life in his own language, wherein he was born.

So successful has been the society in this work that it now circulates the Bible into more than one hundred and fifty languages, among these the American Indian have the Bible in five of their languages, and the Philippine Islanders in eight of theirs. Thousands of Bibles are prepared also for the blind, in English, Arabic, Spanish, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Japanese, Korean and Siamese.

(d) That the new century in which the society now enters finds the society with the largest and most admirable equipment in its history, for the carrying forward of its grand mission of giving the "Indispensable Book" to all mankind.

(e) That of the nine "Home Agencies" established for the efficient distribution of the Bible, four are located so as to cover our Southern Territory, as follows:

South Atlantic Agency.

Rev. M. B. Porter, secretary, Richmond, Va.; Territory: Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Southwestern Agency.

Rev. J. J. Morgan, secretary, Dallas, Tex.; Territory: Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Arkansas.

Central Agency.

Rev. G. S. J. Browne, D. D., secretary, Cincinnati, Ohio; Territory: Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Special Agency for Colored People.

J. P. Wragg, D. D., secretary, Atlanta, Ga.; Territory: Fifteen states.

These agency secretaries stand ready to give any information concerning their work that may be helpful or needful at any time. It appears that the three agencies among the white people, employ one hundred and two paid colporteurs, that these colporteurs visited 168,916 families, that they distributed 293,480 volumes of the Scriptures in 31 languages, in the South Atlantic Agency, and in 42 languages in the Southwestern Agency; that the Special Agency for Colored People employed sixteen colporteurs, and distributed 47,033 volumes.

This committee finds that the Churches of this Assembly contributed during last year to the work of this society, \$8,915.00.

Your committee recommends:

1st. That Presbyteries, pastors and churches be urged during this year to take note in some fitting way of the great service the American Bible Society have rendered the Church and the world in Bible translation and distribution, in order that in all our people there may be fostered an ever-increasing interest in, and support of, this most vital cause.

2d. That inasmuch as the Bible is the one book vital to the purity of the home life, and essential in the prosecution of both home and foreign missions, Sunday-school work and all other activities of the Church, the Assembly directs the Permanent Committee on the Bible Cause to arrange for a suitable address to be delivered on the first Sunday evening of the next sessions of the Assembly, and that the docket be arranged accordingly.

3d. That the goal of our endeavor for the coming year as the best expression of our interest in this great work, be fixed at twelve thousand dollars, and that all our Churches be urged to make contributions to this most worthy cause.

4th. That the Rev. M. B. Porter, Chairman; Rev. E. B. McClure, Rev. W. L. Lingle, and Ruling Elders, W. S. Rhoades, and D. K. Kellogg, be continued as the Permanent Committee on Bible Cause.

Respectfully submitted,
For The Committee,
T. S. Wilson, Chairman.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

Reports have been received from the following institutions, viz.: Union, Louisville, Columbia and Austin Theological Seminaries with that of the Southwestern Presbyterian Divinity School at Clarksville, Tenn. It is a source of profound gratitude to God that these schools of the prophets have been so richly blessed in health, in numbers, as well as in the success of their work. The work done by professors and students has been of a very high order. The changes made in the personnel of the professors have not been numerous.

Southwestern reports the retirement of the Rev. C. W. Somerville, D. D., from the faculty, also the transfer of the Rev. R. W. Fulton, D. D., from the chair of History to the Wadell chair of Biblical Languages and Exegesis; also the election of Rev. George Lang to the McComb chair of History. During the year, forty-five students have been enrolled in the University as candidates for the ministry. Of these twenty-five have had classes in the divinity schools. A campaign to raise \$500,000.00 for additional endowment has been inaugurated.

Austin Seminary reports the Rev. J. O. Reagis as president-elect and professor of the English Bible, and Rev. Thomas W. Currie, as professor of Church History. Her endowment is \$186,000.00, with twenty students in regular attendance.

The endowment of Columbia Seminary is \$249,732.70, with an enrollment of fifty students. This school